

THE CLAIMS OF GOD

NO. 1197

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Know you that the Lord, He is God: it is He that has made us, and not we, ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting: and His truth endures to all generations.”
Psalms 100:3, 4, 5.

BRETHREN, it is a trick of Satan to distract us from the most important and vital matters by the suggestion of trivial considerations. When the best blessings are asking for our acceptance, he will bring the most trivial things into our minds; he will fill our eyes with dust to prevent our looking to the bronze serpent for healing; from the preaching of Jesus he endeavored to distract human attention by debates upon the tithing of mint, and anise, and cumin; the making broad of the borders of one's garments; the wearing of phylacteries; the straining out of gnats, and I know not what else! He followed this method at Jacob's well. When our Lord spoke to the woman about living water, and the salvation of her soul, the evil spirit prompted her to ask concerning Gerizim and Zion—"Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and You say that in Jerusalem men ought to worship." With this same art Satan still works! It should be our business, not being ignorant of the devices of the enemy, to be more than a match for him by breaking away from all vain jangling and trivial questions; we need to go to the foundational truths of God, the cornerstones of faith, the realities of life everlasting, the vitalities of godliness; these lie all Godward and Christward, away from the shadow land of ceremonies and vain speculations! We must go to the eternal rock and everlasting hills whose golden tops are, to the eyes of faith, bright with the blessed day-break! Let us get there, this morning, from the vanities of earth, and may the breath of the Spirit speed us toward the realities of heaven, so to essential things we may give the attention which is essential to them.

For what were we created, my brothers and sisters? I know no better answer than that of the assembly's catechism: "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever." There is a vast amount both of theology and philosophy in that simple answer which our old divines have put into the mouth of a child. Had man remained what God made him, it would have been his very element to glorify his God! To do the will of God would have been as natural to us as to breathe if we had not fallen from original perfection. I was about to say unconsciously, creatures which abide as God created them obey His will; but where there is consciousness, there is added a supreme delight which makes their consciousness and obedience the highest blessings! Look at yonder ponderous orbs; they are not stubborn with the so-called *Vis inertiae*; but joyfully roll along in their predestined courses because God commands them to keep their settled track. See yonder watching stars—they close not their bright eyes, but smile upon us from age to age; those sentinels of heaven quench not their lamps, but shine right on, day and night because God has said, "Let there be light," and from them light must come! We hear of no rebellion in the spheres, no revolt against the law which holds them to their celestial courses. Orion breaks not his bands; the Pleiades cease not their sweet influences; these orbs, mighty as they are, are as subservient to God as the clay to the hand of the potter.

And where there is intelligence, as long as the intelligence remains as God made it, there is no revolt against His will. Yon mighty angel, "whose staff might make a mast for some tall admiral," counts it his honor to fly like a flash of light at the bidding of the eternal. It is no demeaning of his dignity; it is no diminution of his pleasure to do the command of the Most High, hearkening unto His voice. Were we, today, what we should be, it would be our element to love, to serve, to adore our God; and we would not

need ministers to stir us to our pleasurable duty, or remind us of Jehovah's claims! Even the august language of our text would not be needed to bid us worship and bow down, and know that Jehovah is God who has made us, and not we ourselves, for we would bear this truth in every particle of our being!

As things are, however, we need recalling to duty, and urging to obedience. This morning, with the help of God's Holy Spirit, are will submit our hearts to such a call.

I. First we will consider THE CLAIMS OF GOD—ON WHAT ARE THEY GROUNDED? "Know you that the Lord, He is God; it is He that has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving." The claims of God are grounded, first of all, upon *His Godhead*. "Know you that Jehovah, He is God." As Matthew Henry has very properly said, "Ignorance is not the mother of devotion, though it is the mother of *superstition*! True knowledge is the mother and the nurse of piety."

To really know the deity of God, to get some idea of what is meant by saying that He is God, is to have the very strongest argument forced upon one's soul for obedience and worship. The Godhead gave authority to the first law that was ever promulgated when God forbade man to touch the fruit of a certain tree. Why might not Adam pluck the fruit? Simply and only because God forbade it; had God permitted, it had been lawful, but God's prohibition made it sin to eat the fruit. God gave no reason for saying to Adam, "In the day you eat thereof you shall surely die." His commandment, seeing He is God, was the supreme reason, and to have questioned His right, to disobey the law would have been, in itself, flat rebellion. God was to be obeyed simply because He is God! It was a case in which to have introduced an argument would have supposed unwillingness on man's part to obey. Adam could not need more than to know that such-and-such was the will of his God; this same truth of Godhead is the authoritative basis of the moral law of the Ten Commandments. From Sinai no claim for obedience was set up but this, "I am the Lord your God, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." In that word, "GOD," is comprehended the highest, the weightiest, the most righteous reasons for man's yielding up his entire nature to the divine service!

Because the Lord is God, therefore, should we serve Him with gladness, and come before His presence with singing. It was upon this point that God tested Pharaoh, and Pharaoh may be regarded as a sort of representative of all the *enemies* of the Lord. "Thus says the Lord, Let My people go." There was no reason given, no argument, but simply this, "Thus says the Lord." To which Pharaoh, fully appreciating the ground upon which God was acting, answered, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?" So they stood, foot to foot, in fair battle; Jehovah saying, "Thus says the Lord God of the Hebrews, Let My people go"; Pharaoh replying, "I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." You know how that battle ended! That song of Israel at the Red Sea, when the Lord of hosts triumphed gloriously, was a prophecy of the victory which will surely come unto God in all conflicts with His creatures in which His eternal power and Godhead are assailed! The argument derived from the Godhead has not only been used with haughty rebels, but also with questioners and debaters. Observe how Paul speaks. He has entered upon the thorny subject of predestination—a matter which none of us will ever comprehend, a matter in which it is better for us to believe than to reason, and he is met with this, "If all things happen as God decrees, why does He yet find fault, for who has resisted His will?" To which the apostle gives no reply but this, "No, but O man, who are you that replies against God?" Against God there can be no answer! If He wills it, so let it be; it is right! It is good because He so decrees it. Is He God? Submit! If there were no other argument, or reason, let the *Godhead* convince you!

Good men have been argued with in the same way for their profit. That is the core and pith of the book of Job. There is Job, in conflict with his three friends, who are arguing that he must be a wicked man or else God would not so sorely smite him; to which reasoning he replies that he will hold fast his integrity and will not let it go. Then comes Elihu, and he has much to say that is wise, but he cannot settle the matter; at last God comes into the controversy, and what is the Lord's argument? Does He proceed to justify Himself in what He has done with Job, to give Job reasons for covering him with boils and pains, and excuse Himself for having taken a perfect and upright man, and laid him prostrate on a dunghill? No, but instead He unveils a portion of His Godhead, and reveals His power in some such language as this—"Where were you when the foundations of the earth were laid? Declare, if you have un-

derstanding! Who has laid the measures thereof, if you know? Or who has stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations fastened? Or who lays the cornerstone thereof? Have you given the horse strength? Have you clothed his neck with thunder? Does the eagle mount up at your command, and make her nest on high? Have you an arm like God? Or can you thunder with a voice like He?" Thus the Lord displayed the greatness of His power while Job sat cowering down, and cried out, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see You: therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."

Ah, men and women, if you did but know *what* God is, and *who* He is; if but some flashes of His divine omnipotence, or any other of His glorious attributes were let loose upon you—you would perceive that He has the fullest claims upon your allegiance, and that you ought to live for His glory! Imagine that at this instant midnight darkness should settle over us, out of which should burst forth a thunderclap making each stone in this building tremble, while down every one of yonder columns lurid lightning should begin to stream! Imagine that the earth beneath us rocked and reeled after the manner of the city of Lisbon, or Aleppo in years gone by! Conceive that peal on peal of that terrible thunder should be heard—why there is not one of us but would long to be the servant of that terrible God, and instinctively inquire what He would have us to do! Atheists, in times of tempest and storm, have found but little help in their philosophy; like Pharaoh, they have been ready to cry, "Entreat the Lord for me." But the reclining earth, or heaven on a blaze—what were these? The touch of His finger, and glance of His eyes would do far more! He touches the hills and they smoke, but as for Himself, who shall conceive of Him? Let us adore His overwhelming majesty, and bow down before Him, for the Lord, He is God!

The second ground of the Lord's claim is *His creation of us*. "It is He that has made us, and not we ourselves"; we are, every one of us, the offspring of the divine power. This is a fact of which we are informed by Revelation, but it is also one which every instinct of our nature agrees with. You never saw a child startled when it was told, for the first time, that God made him, for within that little mind there dwells an instinct which accepts the statement! The theory that we are not made, but mere developments of materialism, wears upon its face all the marks of unsupported fiction! Certain statements are called axioms, because they are self-evident truths; but this is an axiom reversed, for it is a self-evident lie! To an unsophisticated mind, its repetition is its refutation! Indeed, whenever I hear people mention it, they seem unable to suppress a laugh, and I do not wonder, for even nature, itself, forces them to despise what they pretend to believe. The evolution theory was originated, I have no doubt, either in pandemonium or in bedlam; it is worthy of either, but it is unworthy of any man who possesses either sanity or morality! No, we did not become what we are by chance or growth; God made us! This belief is the easiest escape from all difficulties, and besides, it is true, and everything in us tells us it is so!

Now, since the Lord made us, He has a right to us. The property which God has in man is proved beyond dispute by our being His creatures. The potter has a right to make the vessel for what use he pleases—still he has not such absolute right over his clay as God has over *us*, for the potter does not make the clay; he makes the vessel *from* the clay, but the clay is there from the first. The Lord has, in our case, made the clay from which He has fashioned us, and therefore we are entirely at His disposal, and should serve Him with all our hearts! Why, man, if you make anything, you expect to use it! If you make a tool for your trade, you reckon upon employing it according to your pleasure! And if it would never bend to your will, or be useful to your purpose, you would speedily put it away! So is it with you; the Lord who made you has a right to your service and obedience. Will you not acknowledge His claim? Consider what He has made us. No mean things are we! Who but God could make a man? Raphael takes the pencil in his hand, and with a master touch, creates upon yonder canvas the most wondrous forms; and the sculptor, with his chisel and his hammer, develops amazing beauty! But there is no life, thought, intellect, and if you speak to it, there is neither voice nor answering. How different are *you* from the canvas and the marble, for in your bosom there is a mysterious principle which makes you akin to the deity; for your soul can know reason, believe, understand, and love! I had almost called the soul *infinite*, for God has made it capable of such wondrous things! Thus has He trusted us with high powers and faculties, and lifted us up to a high position. Surely, then, it is ours to serve Him with a loving loyalty!

I like to think that the Lord has made us, and to yield myself to Him on that ground because while the grandeur of what He has made us calls us to homage, even the lowly side has its claim, too, and a sweet one! Our powers are finite, and sometimes we are troubled about that fact, wishing we could do more for our Lord; but we need not fear when we remember that He has made us, and, therefore, fixed the measure of our capacity. In Roger de Wendover's, *Flowers of History*, an ancient Saxon chronicle, we read of a Saxon king who, riding through a forest, came upon a little church in which a priest was saying prayers. This priest was lame and hump-backed, and therefore, the rough Saxon king was ready to despise him, till he heard him chant these words, "It is He that has made us, and not we ourselves." The king blushed and admitted his fault. If, then, we are of small beauty or slender talent, let us not complain, but serve Him who has made us what we are; if we are amazed at a truth of God which we cannot comprehend; if we find portions of God's word to be beyond our depth, let us not complain, but remember that the Lord could have made us understand all things if He had chosen, and as He has not done so. "It is He that has made us, and not we ourselves."

When any say to us, "Your religion is beyond you; the truths you believe you cannot comprehend," we answer, "We are quite satisfied it should be so, for the Lord has made us, and not we ourselves." If He has made us spacious to a larger degree than our fellows, we will give Him all the more honor; but if we are vessels of small capacity, we will not wish to be other than our Maker would have us to be! Dear brothers and sisters, I cannot conceive any higher claim upon our service than this—that God has created us—except that the same truth of God may be sung an octave higher! Common men may sing, "It is He that made us, and not we ourselves"; even the brute creation might join in that confession! But, O you saints, yours is a loftier note, for you have been twice made, born-again, created anew in Christ Jesus, and after a nobler fashion you can sing, "It is He that made us, and not we ourselves. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture." Creation has its claims, but election and redemption rise still higher! From those peculiarly favored, the Lord must have peculiar praise.

A third reason for living unto the Lord lies in *His shepherding of us*. "We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture." God has not left us and gone away; He has not left us as the ostrich leaves her eggs, to be broken by the feet of the passersby; He is watching over us at every hour, even as a shepherd guards his flock; over us all He exercises an unceasing care, a watchful providence, and therefore we should return praise to Him daily! It has been well said that some men represent God as having taken the universe like a watch, wound it up, and then put it under His pillow and gone to sleep. But it is not so! God's finger is on every wheel of the world's machinery; God's power is that which puts force into the laws of the universe—they were a mere dead letter if He were not powerfully active forevermore! Child of Adam, in your cradle you are not rocked by wild winds, but by the hand of love. Daughter of affliction, you are not laid prostrate on yon bed to be the victim of heartless laws, but there is one who makes all your bed in your sickness with His own kind and tender hands! God gives us, day by day, our daily bread; God clothes us; He gives us breath for these heaving lungs, and blood for this beating heart; He keeps us in life, and if His power were withdrawn, we would sink immediately into death!

Now, therefore, because it is so, we are bound to give to our great shepherd our daily service. You are the sheep of His hand; for you the hourly provision, the constant protection, the wise and judicious governance; for you the royal leadership through the desert to the pastures on the other side of Jordan; for you the power that chases away the wolf; for you the ability that finds out the pastures of the wilderness; for you those superior comforts which come from the redeeming angel's presence and flow from the very fact that He is yours! Therefore, render to the Lord your homage and your praise! Men and women, because you are men and women, adore the God who keeps you living—saintly men and women renewed and fed out of the storehouse of divine grace! Serve your God, I pray you, with all your heart, soul and strength, because you especially are the sheep of His pasture, and the people of His hand!

A fourth reason for adoration and service is given in the last verse of our text, it is *the divine character*—"For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations." Here are three master motives for serving the Lord our God. Oh that all would feel their weight! First, He is *good*. Now, if I were to lift up a standard in this assembly this morning and say, "This banner represents the cause of everything that is just, right, true, kind, and benevolent, I would expect many a young heart to

enlist beneath it, for when pretenders in all lands have *talked* of liberty and virtue, choice spirits have been enchanted and rushed to death for the grand old cause! Now, God is good, just, right, true, kind, benevolent—in a word, God is love, and therefore who would not serve Him? Who will refuse to be the servant of infinite perfection? Oh, were He not my God, but another man's God, I think I would steal away to Him to be enlisted beneath the banner of such a God as He is! To keep the laws of God must always be incumbent upon us because those laws are the very essence of right; none of them are arbitrary; all of them the requirements of unsullied holiness and unswerving Justice. Indeed, commands of God are something more than merely right—they are good in the sense of kind! When God says, "You shall not," it is only like a mother forbidding her child to cut its fingers with a sharp tool, or to eat poisonous berries. When God says, "You shall," it is practically a direction to us to be happy, or at least to do that thing which, in due course, leads to happiness. The laws of the Lord our God are right in all respects, and therefore I claim from every one of you the obedience of your heart to God.

Then it is added, "His mercy is everlasting." Who would not serve one whose mercy endures forever? Observe that He is always merciful! Never does a sinner come to Him and find Him devoid of pity! The Lord is merciful and gracious when we are children; He is equally so to us in middle life, and when we grow gray in years He is still merciful. We cannot wear out His patience nor exhaust His forgiving love; He has given us a Savior who always lives to make intercession for transgressors! What a blessing is this! As long as we sin, we have an advocate to plead for us! He has set up a mercy seat for us for all times, and to it we may go as often as we will. He did not erect a mercy seat on earth for a hundred years and then withdraw it, but, blessed be His name, we always have the right of access, and we have still a plea to urge, for Jesus' blood has not lost its savor. There, too, is the Spirit of God always waiting to help us to pray—and whenever we wish to draw near to the mercy seat, He is ready to teach us what we should pray for as we ought, and even to utter groans for us which we, ourselves, could not utter. Oh, who would not serve a God whose mercy is everlasting? Cruel is that heart which infinite gentleness does not persuade! If God is merciful, man should no more be rebellious! It is added, "His *truth* endures to all generations." That is to say you will not find in God one thing today and another thing tomorrow; what He promises, He will perform. Every word of His stands fast forever, like He does, *immutable*! Trust Him today, and you will not find Him fail you, neither tomorrow, nor all the days of your life! The God of Abraham is our God, today, and He has not changed through the revolutions of years! The Savior whom we trusted in our childhood is still the same yesterday, today, and forever!

Blessed be His name! I think it was this attribute of God that had the greatest charm to my young heart. It seemed so sweet to rest my soul with an unchangeable God, so delightful to know that if I did once enjoy His love, He would never take it away from me; that if He was once reconciled to me by the death of His Son, I should forever be His child, and be dear to His heart! This gave my heart gladness, and I hold forth this truth, now, as a sweet inducement to those present who have not trusted to the Lord that they should do so—for the Lord is good, and His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations! Thus I have set before you the grounds of God's claims. Are they solid? Do you consent to them? Oh, that sovereign grace would compel each of us to live alone for the glory of God! It is His most righteous due!

II. Now very briefly, indeed, THE CLAIMS OF GOD—HOW HAVE WE REGARDED THEM? Answer for yourselves. Alas, some have paid no respect to these claims—in fact they have denied them, and have said, in effect, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?" Have I one such person here? I pray God to change his heart, for the gnat may much more wisely contend with the flame which has already burned its wings, than you contend with your Maker! As surely as you live, God will vanquish you, and make you acknowledge His supremacy! If you will not obey Him, He will dash you in pieces like a potter's vessel! A far larger number of persons, however, ignore, rather than oppose God's claims. They have lived in this world, now, perhaps, to middle age and never thought about God, at all, though He has made them, and kept them in being. That is the way that many a debtor has done with his debts; he has felt easy because he has not been dunned about them! But surely that is a doubtful honesty which rests in peace because the creditor does not happen to clamor! A truly honest man is dissatisfied till he

has discharged his obligations, and every noble spirit will be discontented with itself because it has not paid its due to God.

What if the Lord has used no severities; has sent no sheriff's officers of sickness or bereavement; shall we not all the more heartily inquire, "What shall I render unto the Lord?" Shall we rob God because He is merciful? Shall we make His goodness a reason for neglecting Him? Can it be right that we should never render to the Most High according to the benefits received? There are multitudes, who, in theory, acknowledge all the claims of God, but as a matter of fact they deny them, or they evade them by a merely outward religiousness! They will not be honest, but they will go to church; they will not cleanse themselves from iniquity, but they will be baptized; to live a holy life is a matter they care not for, but they will take the sacraments, believe in Jesus, and yield themselves up to the love of God. They will not, but they have not the slightest objection to joining in a procession, or going upon a pilgrimage—thus giving God brass counters instead of gold, outward appearances instead of real obedience! The love of the heart and trust of the spirit, man refuses to his Maker—and so long as he does so, all his offerings are in vain! Sorrowfully must we all confess, also, that where we have tried to honor the Lord, by His grace, and have done so, in a measure, yet we have failed in perfection. We have to confess that oftentimes the pressure of the body which is near, and of the things that are seen and tangible have been greater upon us than the force of the things which cannot be seen, but are eternal. We have yielded to *self* too often, and have robbed the Lord! What shall we do in this case? Why, we have to bless our everlasting God and Father, that He has provided an atoning sacrifice for all our shortcomings! And there is one, partaker of our nature, who stands in the gap on our behalf, in whom we can be accepted, notwithstanding all our shortcomings and offenses! Let us go to God in Christ Jesus! He bids us believe in Jesus, and assures us of pardon and salvation on the spot if we do so! The demands of God are met in the life and death of His only-begotten Son. Faith lets us see that they were met for *us* and that we are clear. Brothers and sisters, we have believed, yes, and we *will* believe, that Jesus died for us; and here comes our joy that we are delivered from the wrath of God, notwithstanding that we have fallen short of His commands.

And now, what follows? I feel, concerning it, this: that now there are more bonds to bind me to the service of God than ever! He has forgiven me for His name's sake, and washed me in the blood of His own Son, and I am His by firmer bonds than ever! No obligations are as forcible as those which arise out of free grace and dying love! Pardoned sin is no argument for the indulgence of future sin, but an abundant argument for future holiness in every heart that feels its power. O you saints of God, transgression being blotted out, you will no more transgress! Made His elect, you elect to serve Him! Being His adopted children, you rejoice to do your Father's will! And now and forever you are the Lord's!

III. This brings me to the concluding note of our discourse, which is this—THE CLAIMS OF GOD, WHEN THEY ARE REGARDED, HOW DO THEY INFLUENCE MEN? Give me your hearts a few minutes. I am persuaded, brothers and sisters, that the noblest form of man that is to be found on the face of the earth is the man who serves God! I am convinced that all other forms of manhood are faulty and imperfect to a very high degree in them, and are also far inferior in force and beauty to that which is produced in men by consecration to the service of God. A man who is guided by the Holy Spirit to live for the Lord is altogether a nobler being than one moved by a less lofty aim. Let me show you how healthy it is to serve God. The man who serves God, led by the Spirit of God to do so, is humble! Were he proud, it would be proof, at once, that he was not serving God! But the remembrance that God is His sovereign, and has made him; that in His hands is his breath; makes the good man feel that he is nothing but dust and ashes at his very best. He cannot cry out with Nebuchadnezzar, "Behold this great Babylon which I have built"—he is far more likely to crouch down where Nebuchadnezzar did after God had taught him better, and to say—"Now I extol and honor the King of heaven."

Serving God keeps man in his right place. It is a balance to him, without which he might be drifted to destruction like the myriads of butterflies which I have seen far out at sea, condemned, before long, to sink into the waves. At the same time, while it sobers a man, it fills him with joy, praise, and gratitude, thus giving him sails as well as ballast. A man who loves to serve God receives His mercies with great thankfulness and joy; he is content with the will of God, and therefore, is full of gratitude to Him. And

let me tell you there are no sweeter moments in a man's life than those which are occupied with adoring gratitude! Nothing is more purging, or cleanses a man from earthly grossness, and from all the defilement of selfishness, than to serve the ever-living and ever-blessed God, and to feel that there is one so much greater, so much better than one's self, towards which we aspire, for whom we live! Thus is a man at once humbled, cheered, and elevated; the service of God is honorable as no other service is.

There *is* a man who lives for himself—his great objective is to get money. Look at him and consider him well! Is not the greed of wealth one of the most beggarly passions that can possess a human bosom? Yon ant, which labors for its commonwealth, is, to my mind, up among the angels, compared with a man who sweats, and toils, and starves himself merely for the sake of heaping up for himself a mass of yellow metal! Can I more highly commend the lover of pleasure? What is pleasure? As the world understands it, it is a hollow sham, a veneer of mirth covering deep dissatisfaction! I often think when I hear worldlings laughing at such poor nonsense, that they pull each other's sleeves, and say, "Laugh. You ought to laugh!" I cannot see the mirth of their amusements, but *they* do. They struggle to seem happy, but what, after all, is it to have lived to be amused; to have spent all one's powers in killing time? Is anything more contemptible? How horrible it is when man lives for lust and puts forth all his strength to indulge his passions! Brutes! Beasts! Alas, I slander the beasts when I compare them to such men!

The man who lives for God is a far nobler being! Why, in the very act of self-renunciation, and of dedication to God, the man has been lifted up from earth and from all that holds him down to its dust and mire! He has risen so much nearer to the cherubim, so much nearer, in fact, to the divine! This makes a man a man, for a man who serves is courageous and too manly to be a slave! "No," he says, "God bids me do such an act, and I will do it straight ahead; and though such-and-such a thing you bid me do, since God has not commanded me, your bidding is no law to me! My knees were made to bow before my God, and not to you; and my mind to believe what God reveals, and not what you choose to say." He is the free man whom the love of God makes free! What wonderful proofs we have had of this throughout history, for the men who have served God have been the most intrepid of mortals. Behold the burning fiery furnace, and the tyrant's face almost as red as the furnace itself—he can hardly speak, he is choked with passion because the three young men will not worship the bronze image! But look how cool they are as they say, "The God whom we serve is able to deliver us, but if not, be it known unto you that we will not bow down to the image which you have set up." Here is the true style of manhood! The love of God makes heroes! Give a man a resolve to serve God, and he is endowed with wondrous perseverance.

Look at the apostles, martyrs and missionaries of the faith—how they have pressed on despite a world in arms! When a nation has been apparently inaccessible, they have found an entrance! When the first missionary has died, another has been ready to follow in his footsteps! The first church, in her weakness, poverty and ignorance, struggled with philosophy and wealth, and all the power of heathen Rome, till at last the weak overcame the strong, and the foolish overthrew the wise! They that serve God cannot be conquered—from defeats they learn victory! If they have to wait, they wait for they have linked with the lifetime of the eternal, and God is in no hurry, nor are they! If to secure a hearing for the truth of God takes a generation, let it take a generation! If it takes 50 generations, let it take them, but the deed shall be done, and the truth shall be preached, and the idols shall be abolished, and God shall be adored! O Lord, Your service makes us akin to You! Blessed are they that wear Your yoke! How strong they grow, how patient to endure, how firm to stand fast, how swift to run! They mount with wings as eagles when they learn to serve You! The man who is led by the Holy Spirit to serve God is incited, thereby, to zeal, fervor, and a self-sacrifice to which nothing else could bring him!

If you are familiar with the lives of the pioneers of the cross, and especially with the deaths of the martyrs, you will have seen what divine grace can make of men! Are not their deeds sublime? Why, these men laughed at impossibilities, and scorned difficulties! They counted the rack and the torture mere everyday things, and learned to smile in the face of death, itself, because they served God! They never thought of running away, nor dreamed of retracting their testimony. Men said, "You are fools." They were prepared to hear them say that, and reckoned it a fulfillment of prophecy. The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers took counsel together and said, "We will stamp you out." They were pre-

pared for that, also, but they were not stamped out! They saw insuperable difficulties in their way to the eyes of sense, but they did not care what the eyes of sense saw—they used the eyes of *faith*—and believing that they were engaged in the service of God! They knew that God would be with them; they felt that all the forces of nature on earth, and all the angels in heaven, and all the attributes of deity were on the side of the man who is doing God's service—and therefore they went straight on! I have heard say that a mad man will often display the strength of 10 men, and I know there is another side to that fact, for when a man becomes possessed with the Holy Spirit, and is carried right away with it, there is *no telling* what force is in him—he will be 10 men in one! Why, there are cases in which a nation of men have seemed to have been bound up into one single person when the man has surrendered himself to the service of God!

Look at Martin Luther! You cannot regard him as an ordinary man; you cannot help viewing him as a conglomeration of a whole tribe of men! He believes he has the truth of God to proclaim, and in God's name he preaches it! And if there are as many devils in Worms as there are tiles on the tops of the houses it is nothing to Luther! And if the elector of Saxony tells him that he will no longer shelter him, what will he do? Why he declares that he will shelter himself beneath the broad shield of the eternal God! When the Pope issues a Bull against him, he burns the document! What did he care? He would have burned Rome, itself, for that matter! The man had courage enough for anything! Or take John Knox, all emaciated, weak and ready to die—and yet so God-possessed, so inspired that he is not preaching for a quarter-of-an-hour before you think he will dash the pulpit to shivers! He shakes the whole of Scotland, and is more dreaded by the Popish Queen than an army of 10,000 men, for God is in the man! Oh, get to feel, “It is God's will, and at all hazards I am going to do it, for God bids me.” Why, sir, you may as well try to stop the sun in its course as to stop a man who is mastered by *that* conviction! If ever this driveling age of little men is to be lifted up into something like respectability, and redeemed from the morass of falsehood in which it lies festering, we must breed a race of men who mean to serve God, come what may—and to make no reckoning but this—“Is this right? It shall be done! Is this wrong? Then it shall cease!”

There must be no compromise, no talk about marring our usefulness and spoiling our position by being too exact. Usefulness and position! Let them be marred and spoiled if the truth of God comes in the way, for God is to be followed into the jungle—yes—and down the wild beasts' throats, and into the jaws of hell if He leads the way! God must be the guide, and if we follow God it shall be well with us. But if we do not, that which man thinks easiest is, after all, the hardest. He thinks it easiest to be as near right as he can, but to run no risks; he thinks it best to keep peace at home, to yield many points, and not be too Puritanical, and too precise, and so on. *That* is the *easy* way—and the way which God abhors! It is the way which will end in a festering conscience, and in being shut out of heaven! The way to serve God is to be washed in the blood of Jesus—and then to obey the Lord without reserve, and seek only His honor! This is the way to heaven! And when we reach those blissful seats, we shall be all in tune with the perfected, for they serve the Lord day and night—and find it bliss to do so! This preparation and service on earth is absolutely essential to the enjoyment of heaven above! May God grant you, then, by His Holy Spirit, to yield yourselves up to God, to serve Him—and may we meet above! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 95, 96.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—187, 66, 195.

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